

Department of Health and Human Services
Food and Drug Administration
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May 2000
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Eating Well as We Age

The Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, is a United States government agency that makes sure foods are safe, wholesome and honestly labeled.

Eating Well

Many older people have trouble eating well. This booklet tells why. Then it gives ideas on what you can do about it. Using the food label is one way to eat well. There are others.

Problem: Can't chew

Do you have trouble chewing? If so, you may have trouble eating foods like meat and fresh fruits and vegetables.

What to do: Try other foods.

Instead of:	Try:
fresh fruit	fruit juices and soft canned fruits, like applesauce, peaches and pears
raw vegetables	vegetable juices and creamed and mashed cooked vegetables
meat	ground meat, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, and foods made with milk, like pudding and cream soups
sliced bread	cooked cereals, rice, bread pudding, and soft cookies

Problem: Upset stomach

Stomach problems, like too much gas, may make you stay away from foods you think cause the problem. This means you could be missing out on important nutrients, like vitamins, calcium, fiber and protein.

What to do: Try other foods.

Instead of:

milk

Try:

milk foods that may not bother you, like cream soups, pudding, yogurt and cheese

vegetables like cabbage and broccoli

vegetable juices and other vegetables, like green beans, carrots and potatoes

fresh fruit

fruit juices and soft canned fruits

Problem: Can't shop

You may have problems shopping for food. Maybe you can't drive anymore. You may have trouble walking or standing for a long time.

What to do:

- Ask the local food store to bring groceries to your home. Some stores deliver free. Sometimes there is a charge.
- Ask your church or synagogue for volunteer help. Or sign up for help with a local volunteer center.
- Ask a family member or neighbor to shop for you. Or pay someone to do it. Some companies let you hire home health workers for a few hours a week. These workers may shop for you, among other things. Look for these companies in the Yellow Pages of the phone book under "Home Health Services."

Problem: Can't cook

You may have problems with cooking. It may be hard for you to hold cooking utensils, and pots and pans. Or you may have trouble standing for a long time.

What to do:

- Use a microwave oven to cook TV dinners, other frozen foods, and foods made up ahead of time by the store.
- Take part in group meal programs offered through senior citizen programs. Or, have meals brought to your home.
- Move to a place where someone else will cook, like a family member's home or a home for senior citizens.

To find out about senior citizen group meals and home-delivered meals, call (1-800) 677-1116. These meals cost little or no money.

Problem: No appetite

Older people who live alone sometimes feel lonely at mealtimes. Loneliness can make you lose your appetite. Or you may not feel like making meals for just yourself.

Maybe your food has no flavor or tastes bad. This could be caused by medicines you are taking.

What to do:

- Eat with family and friends.
- Take part in group meal programs, offered through senior citizen programs.
- Ask your doctor if your medicines could be causing appetite or taste problems. If so, ask about changing medicines.
- Increase the flavor of food by adding spices and herbs.

Problem: Short on money

Not having enough money to buy enough food can keep you from eating well.

What to do:

- Buy low-cost foods, like dried beans and peas, rice and pasta. Or buy foods that contain these items, like split pea soup and canned beans and rice.
- Use coupons for money off on foods you like.
- Buy foods on sale. Also buy store-brand foods. They often cost less.
- Find out if your local church or synagogue offers free or low-cost meals.
- Take part in group meal programs offered through local senior citizen programs. Or, have meals brought to your home.
- Get food stamps. Call the food stamp office listed under your county government in the blue pages of the telephone book.

Read the Label

Look for words that **say something healthy about the food.**

Examples are:

- Low Fat
- Cholesterol Free
- Good Source of Fiber

Look for words that **tell about the food's relation to a disease.**

A low-fat food may say:

While many factors affect heart disease, diets low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of this disease.

The words may be on the front or side of the food package.

FDA makes sure these words are true.

Use label claims like these to choose foods that help make a good diet.

Look for "Nutrition Facts"

Most food labels tell what kinds and amounts of vitamins, minerals, protein, fat, and other nutrients are in a food.

This information is called "Nutrition Facts." You can find it on the side or back of most food labels.

Use "Nutrition Facts"

1. Look at the serving size.
2. Find the % Daily Value. The numbers underneath tell how much of each nutrient listed is in one serving.
3. About 100% of each nutrient each day is usually healthful. If you're on a special diet, like a low-sodium or low-fat diet, use the % numbers to pick low-sodium and low-fat foods.

The 3g (grams) of total fat in one serving of this food provides 5% of fat for the day, leaving 95% more fat allowed that day in a normal diet. The 300mg (milligrams) of sodium provide 13% for the day, leaving 87% more sodium allowed that day in a normal diet. The "mg" number is much larger than the "g" number because it takes many, many milligrams to equal 1 gram.

Do You Have More Questions About Eating Well As You Age?

Ask your doctor or other health-care worker.

And ask FDA. There may be an FDA office near you. Look for the number in the blue pages of the phone book.

You can also contact FDA through its toll-free number, 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332).

Or on the World Wide Web at www.fda.gov.